

The best-kept secret for CLIMATE ACTION

Protected areas as nature-based climate solutions (NBCS)

WHAT ARE NBCSs?

Nature-based climate solutions are strategies that work with nature to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change while supporting biodiversity. NBCSs:

- Store carbon in healthy ecosystems
- Remove carbon from the atmosphere
- Help wildlife and people adapt to climate change



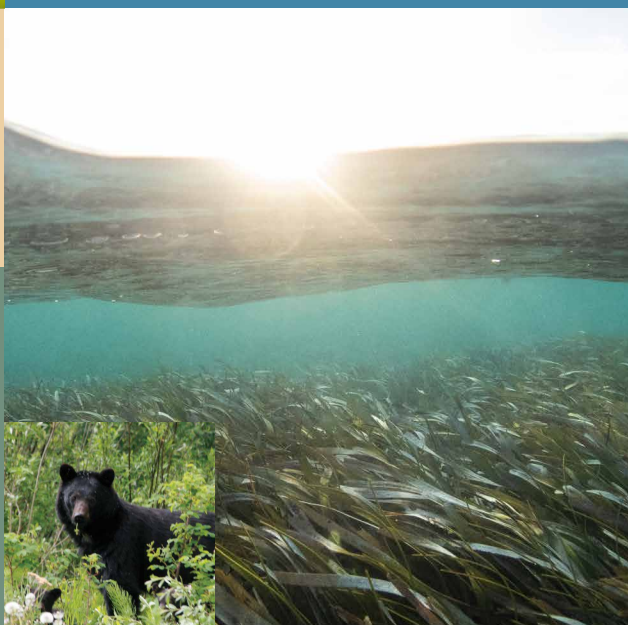
NBCSs MUST CONTRIBUTE TO RECONCILIATION



- Respect Indigenous rights, responsibilities and self-determination
- Centre Indigenous knowledges and worldviews
- Channel resources to Indigenous-led initiatives

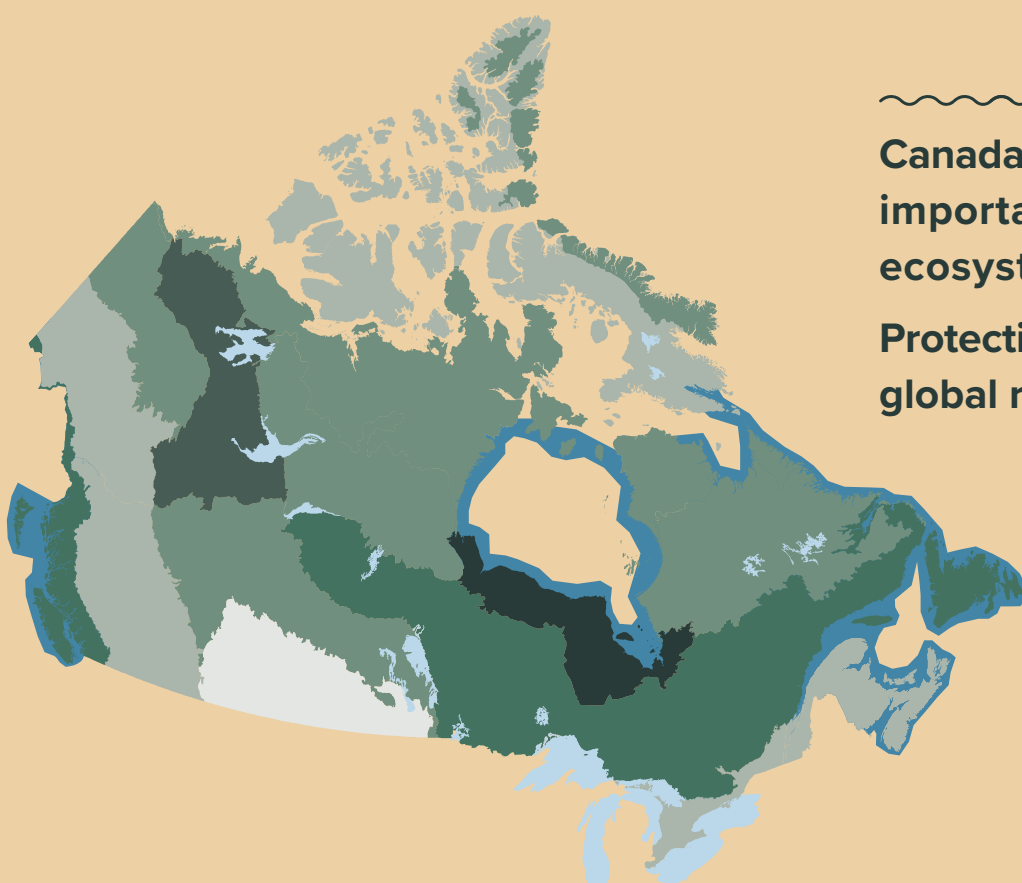
WHY PROTECTED AREAS?

- Protected areas **conserve nature and safeguard carbon** stored in healthy ecosystems.
- This offers the **greatest** short-term benefits as NBCS by preventing development that would cause carbon to be released from ecosystems into the atmosphere.
- Studies show that protected areas **store more carbon** and take more CO2 out of the atmosphere than areas outside of protection.



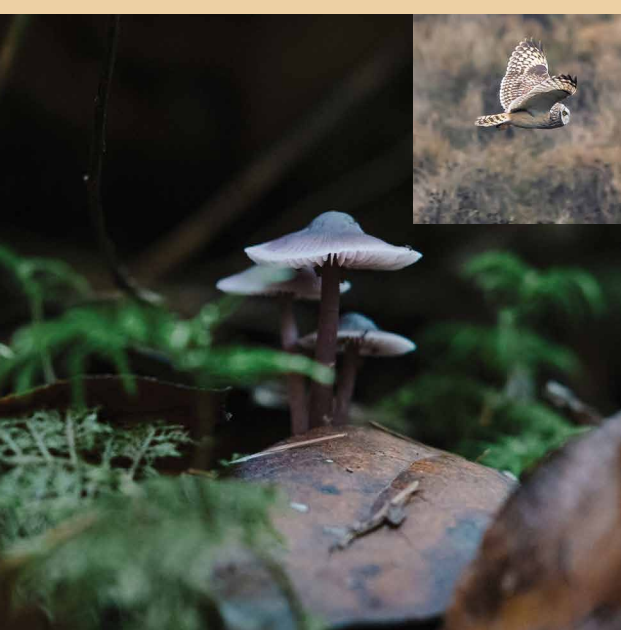
“Canada’s—and the world’s—future depends on how effectively Canada’s vast carbon stocks are preserved”

—Canadian Council of Academies



Canada has some of the most important carbon-dense ecosystems in the world.

Protecting these is our global responsibility.



Most carbon-dense ecosystems in Canada remain unprotected.

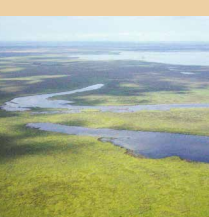
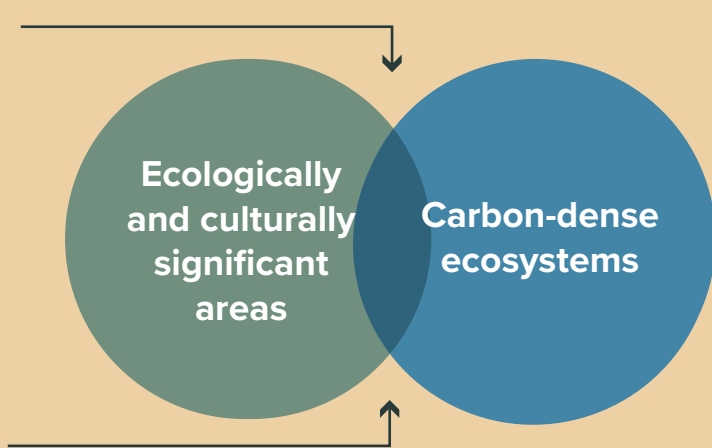
PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

1. **Recognize the value** of protected areas as nature-based climate solutions in climate policy and legislation.
2. **Identify and protect** key land, freshwater and ocean ecosystems that have high carbon and biodiversity value.
3. **Ensure adequate**, long-term funding and **support** for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.

PROTECTING AREAS THAT CONSERVE BOTH WILL DELIVER COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS THAT:

- Increase the resilience of ecosystems
- Preserve biodiversity
- Avoid carbon emissions
- Contribute to reconciliation

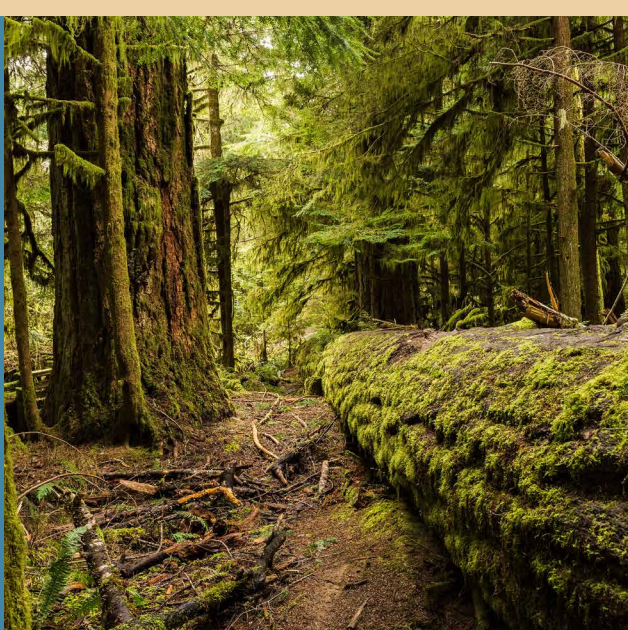
This should be a cornerstone of Canada’s climate action strategy.



CANADA HAS COMMITTED TO

- Protect **30%** of our land and ocean by 2030.
- Reduce carbon emissions by **40 to 45%** from 2005 levels by 2030, and be **net-zero** by 2050.

Protected areas as NBCSs are an important pathway to achieve both objectives.



cpaws.org



For more information on protected areas as NBCS, see: **Protected Areas as a Nature-Based Climate Solution**, Dr. Risa B. Smith, December 2023; **Leveraging Protected Areas for Climate Action Policy Brief**, CPAWS, December 2024. Available at cpaws.org

Photos: Chris (pronghorn antelope), Emily Smith (black bear), Benjamin L. Jones (seagrass), Pete Nuij (owl), Jesse Bauer (mushrooms), Landon Parenteau (Saskatchewan), Clement Fusil (moss), Ferenc (Cathedral Grove)